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GHOST RIDER
2099
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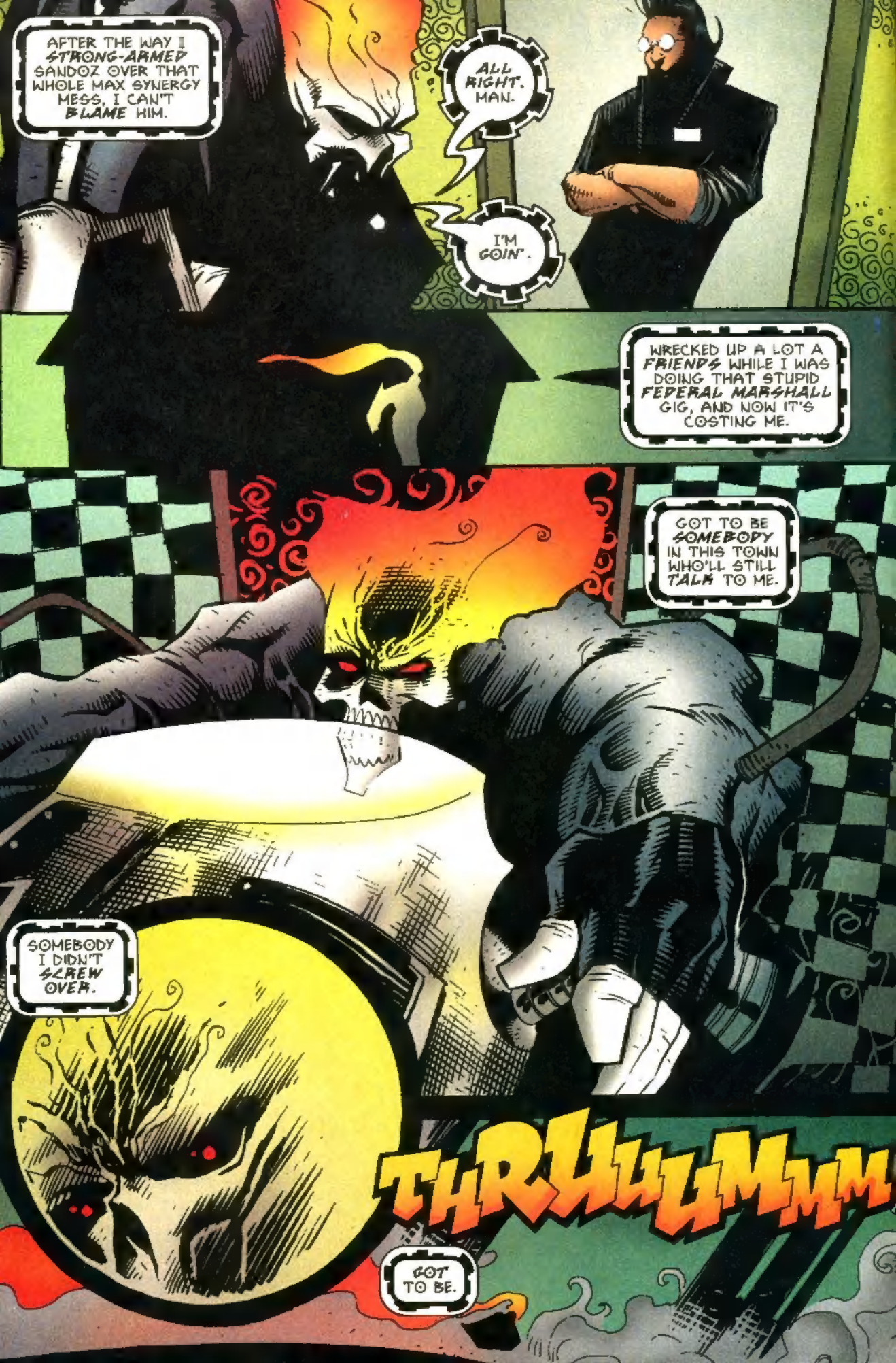
50 CCs OF CORTDRAZINE OUGHT TO QUIET HIM DOWN.
AND PLEASE, TRY TO REMEMBER YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY "CODE BLUE."
HURGK
PFFST
EMERGENCY ROOM ADMISSIONS'RE UP 300% IN THE PAST THREE DAYS.
I'VE GOT KIDS WORKING DOUBLE AND TRIPLE SHIFTS, AND WE STILL CAN'T KEEP UP.
GNAAA
KERPLOOTCH
IT'S THE THINGS THEY DON'T COVER IN MED-SCHOOL.
Ooh.
JAMMIT.
THAT'S THE THIRD ONE THIS WEEK.
NO EFFECT!
VITAL SIGNS'RE GOING BALLISTIC!
LOOK OUT, HE'S GONNA --
AND IT'S NOT JUST MORE OF THE USUAL BATCH OF ACCIDENTS, GANG WAR CASUALTIES AND BOTCHED HUMAN SACRIFICES.

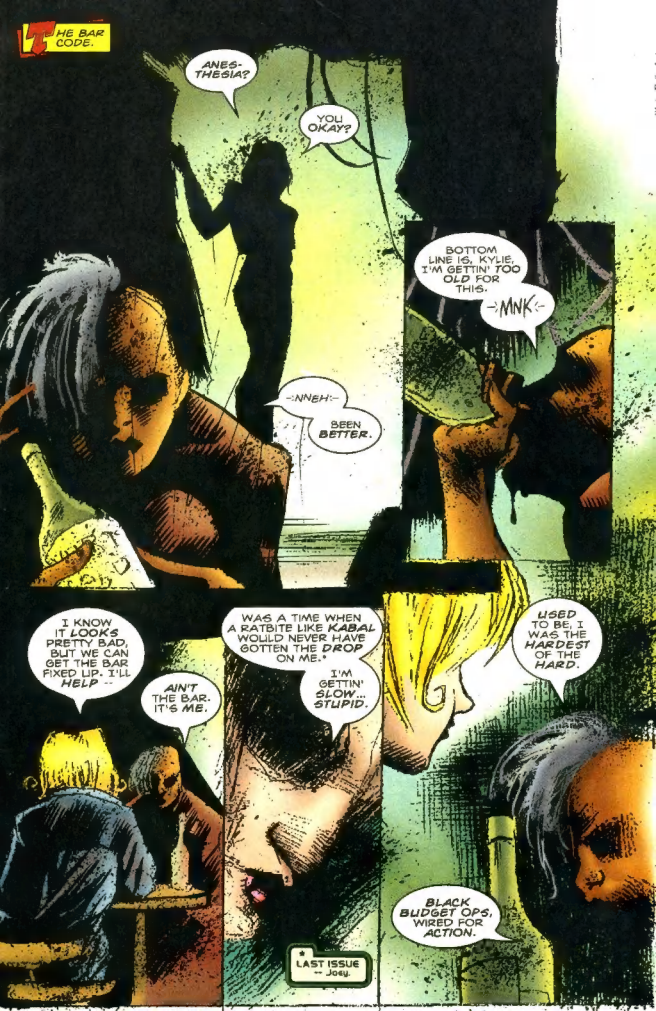
BITHEADS.
WHAT DO THEY EXPECT, PUMPING THEMSELVES FULL OF BOGUS GARAGE-BREWED WHITE HEAT SUBSTI-TUTES?
Um, THERE'S... SOMEONE... HERE TO SEE YOU, DOC.
YOU?!
-OOFFH-
SANDOZ. AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU.
'ZAT SO?
IT'S NOT MUTUAL.

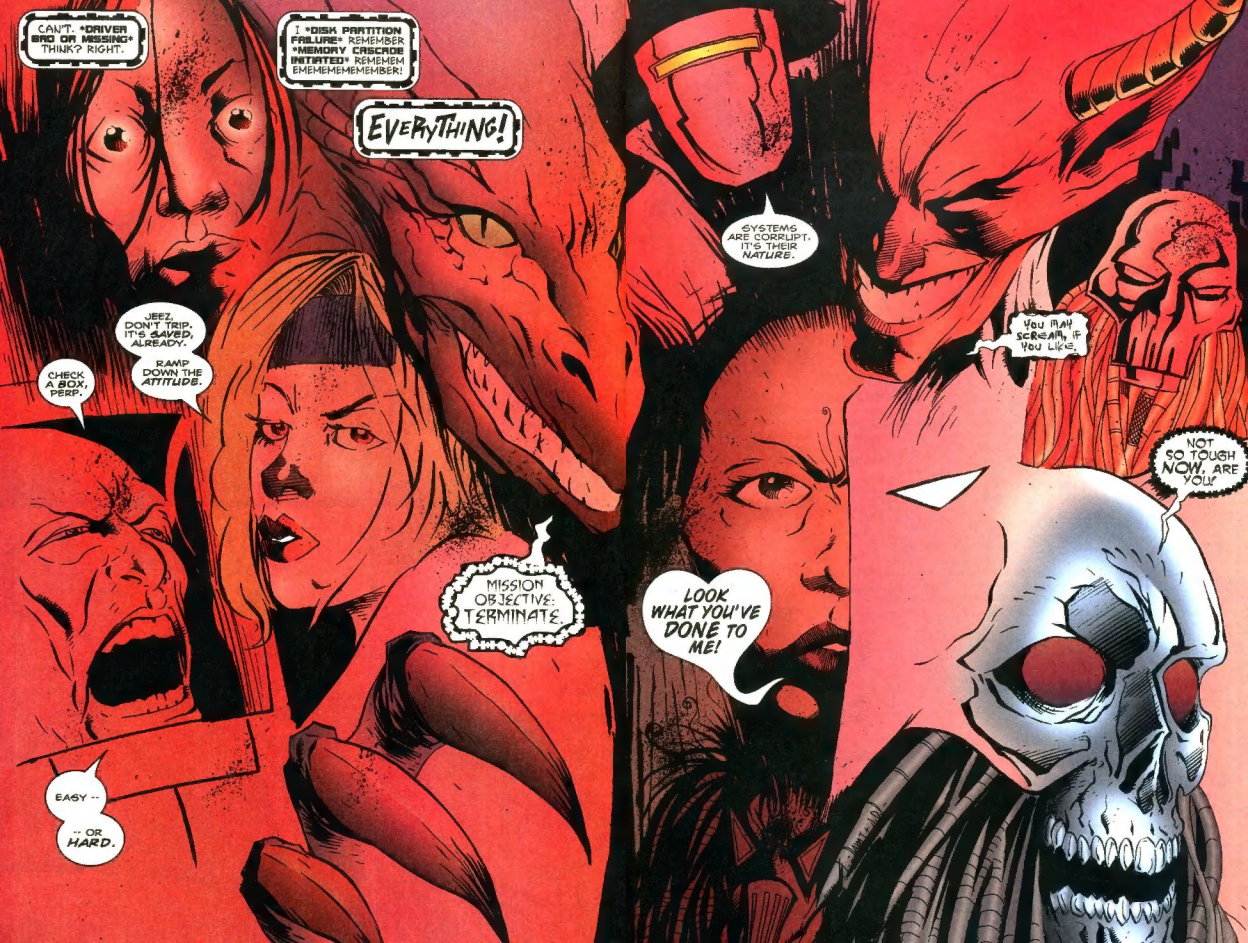
LOOKIT ME, MAN -- I CAN BARELY WALK STRAIGHT. I'M IN REAL BAD SHAPE.
GOT A MAJOR SYSTEMS CRASH HAPPENING, I NEED --
AFTER THE LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE*, YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF NERVE COMING HERE AND ASKING ME FOR HELP.
WELL, YOU'RE NOT THE LAW IN THIS TOWN ANYMORE --
* IN GR 2099 #17 --Joey
HURK
WHUK
-- AND THIS TIME I DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH YOUR BULLYING.
GET OUT OF MY HOSPITAL.
I...
...GUESS I HAD THAT COMIN'...


AFTER THE WAY I STRONG-ARMED SANDOZ OVER THAT WHOLE MAX SYNERGY MESS, I CAN'T BLAME HIM.
ALL RIGHT, MAN.
I'M GOIN'.
WRECKED UP A LOT A FRIENDS WHILE I WAS DOING THAT STUPID FEDERAL MARSHALL GIG, AND NOW IT'S COSTING ME.
GOT TO BE SOMEBODY IN THIS TOWN WHO'LL STILL TALK TO ME.
SOMEBODY I DIDN'T SCREW OVER.
THRUUUMMM
GOT TO BE.

MEANWHILE, ABOVE TRANSVERSE CITY A MALIGNANT PRESENCE LURKS...
THE PRODUCT OF SCIENCE GONE AWRY, IT IS THE DISTILLATE OF RAW MADNESS, A SEETHING MIASMA OF UNBOUND PSIONIC ENERGIES.
AND, AS IT SPREADS ACROSS THE NIGHT SKY, SO TOO DOES ITS INFLUENCE ON THE POPULATION BELOW...
-: Sigh :-
DON'T KNOW WHAT GOT INTO ME. MUST BE CRAZINESS IN THE AIR.
HUNH?
NO NO NO
TOO LONG WITHOUT SLEEP, I'M --
STILL THERE...
LIKE TIME-LAPSE FOOTAGE...THE CITY BEING CLAIMED BY THE RAIN FOREST...
DECADES' WORTH OF OVERGROWTH SPROUTING IN SECONDS, VEGETATION CRAWLING OVER DECAYING CONCRETE AND STEEL...

I HEAR JAGUARS...
...LORD, NO... I'M BACK IN SAN JOAQUIN.
BACK... IN THE PLAGUE ZONE.
EVERYTHING I CAME TO TRANSVERSE CITY TO FORGET --
-- HAS FOLLOWED ME HERE!
NNUUHH
NO! GET BACK!
WORDS'RE NO GOOD, THEIR MINDS'RE GONE, DESTROYED BY BENWAY'S DOOMSDAY VIRUS, MACHUPO CAIXAO...
STAY AWAY, I SAID!
MUURGH
...ALL THEY UNDERSTAND IS THEIR PAIN... AND THEIR INHUMAN HUNGER...
I'LL KILL YOU!
DOCTOR?!
EEEEEE!


ANES-THESIA?
YOU OKAY?
-NNEH:-
BEEN BETTER.
BOTTOM LINE IS, KYLIE, I'M GETTIN' TOO OLD FOR THIS.
-MNK:-
I KNOW IT LOOKS PRETTY BAD, BUT WE CAN GET THE BAR FIXED UP. I'LL HELP --
AIN'T THE BAR. IT'S ME.
WAS A TIME WHEN A RATBITE LIKE KABAL WOULD NEVER HAVE GOTTEN THE DROP ON ME.*
I'M GETTIN' SLOW... STUPID.
USED TO BE, I WAS THE HARDEST OF THE HARD.
BLACK BUDGET OPS, WIRED FOR ACTION.
* LAST ISSUE -- Joey.


CAN'T. *DRIVER BIO DA MISSING* THINK? RIGHT.
! *DISK PARTITION FAILURE* REMEMBER *MEMORY CASCADE INITIATED* REMEMEM EMEMEMEMEMEMBER!
EVERYTHING!
JEEZ, DON'T TRIP. IT'S SAVED. ALREADY.
RAMP DOWN THE ATTITUDE.
CHECK A BOX, PERP.
MISSION OBJECTIVE: TERMINATE
EASY --
-- OR HARD.
SYSTEMS ARE CORRUPT. IT'S THEIR NATURE.
YOU MAY SCREAM, IF YOU LIKE.
NOT SO TOUGH NOW, ARE YOU?
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO ME!

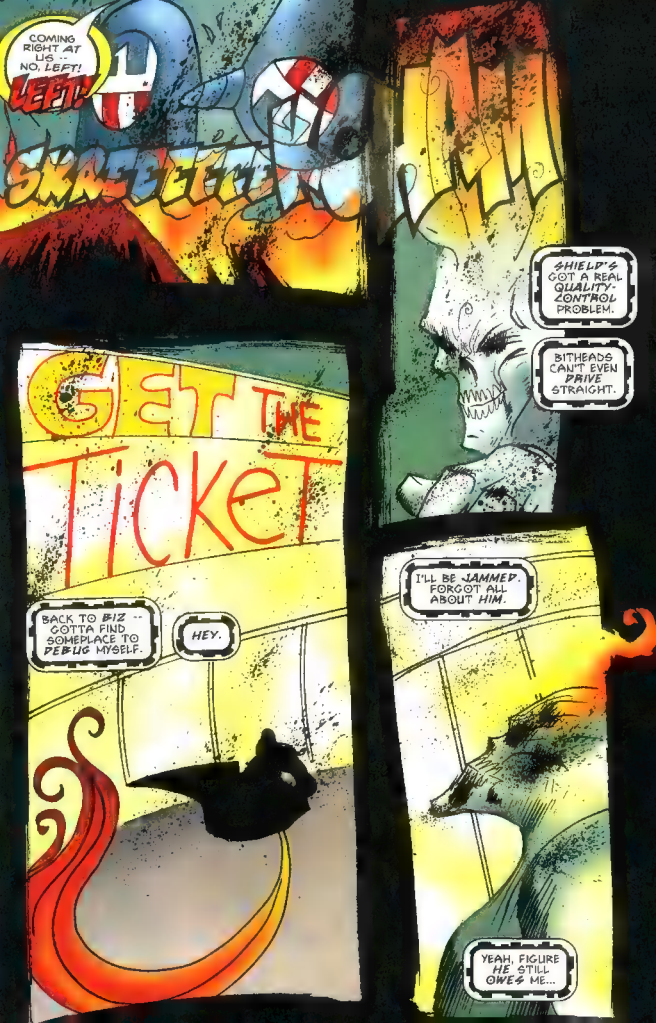
DID A LOT OF NASTY WORK WITH THESE HANDS.
WETWORK. SAO PAULO. L-5. FREEZONE.
BACK WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG, STRONG.
NOT LIKE NOW.
SHOULD'A GONE FOR THE PROSTHETIC OPTION, THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS UPGRADE.
PROBLEM WITH MEAT IS, EVENTUALLY IT ROTS AND --
HHGGK
ANESTHESIA!
WHAT'S WRONG?
GNAHH
HAKK
TOO OLD.. HEART... STROKE, MAYBE...
FREEZE!

SHIELD'S REINSTATED THE WARRANT ON THE GHOST RIDER --
-- AND WE MEAN TO BRING HIM IN.
WHAT'RE YOU --
OH LORD
THEY'RE BUGS
WE'LL ASK THE QUESTIONS HERE.
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, YOU'LL COOPERATE.
NO!
GO 'WAY!
DON'T TOUCH ME!
-HUUUGLPH-

CITIPLEX METRO, HOME OF WILLIS ADAMS.
I DON'T KNOW, MORTY. I'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF THINKING LATELY, AND --
WHAT'S TO THINK ABOUT? MAINLINE MEDIA WANTS YOU BACK, AND WE'RE WILLING TO PAY BIG TO GET YOU.
PROMO'S ALL SET TO SELL YOU AS A NATIONAL HERO FOR DESERTING DOOM'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN.
THREE RIVAL NETWORKS ALREADY HAVE SERIES BASED ON YOUR STORY. "HONEST REPORTER FUGITIVE FROM CORRUPT --"
THERE WASN'T MUCH STORY. I HID AND THEY DIDN'T FIND ME.
WHO CARES?
IT'S HIGH-CONCEPT! THE REST IS DETAILS.
THE TRUTH IS IN THE DETAILS, MORTY. AND WE'VE BEEN TREATING IT LIKE TRIVIA FOR TOO LONG.
I'M NOT SURE I CAN GO BACK TO BEING PART OF THE PROBLEM.
LISTEN, MISTER WE OWN THAT FAMOUS FACE OF YOURS. WE CAN --
BIP
NOW TH-TH-THAT'S PUTTING YOUR FINGER DOWN!

AWWWW, CHEER UP, W-W-WILL!
OUR NEWWWWW AND IMPROVED PROCESS WILL GET RID OF THAT STUBBORN CONSCIENCE IN A JIFFY -- WITH NO SCRUBBING NEEDED!
BEST-ST-ST OF ALL, IT'S EASY TO SWALLOW!
APPLAUSE
WHO THE SHOCK ARE YOU?
MMMMMOI?
LITTLE OLD M-M-MBEB?
I'M Y-Y-YOU, WILL. THE FAMOUS TALKING HEAD YOU WANTED TO BE.
MAGNIFICENT, AREN'T I?
YOU'RE A TRAVESTY.
AND I WON'T GO BACK TO BEING YOU.
NOT NOW --
-- NOT EVER!
SKRASSH
SKP POP

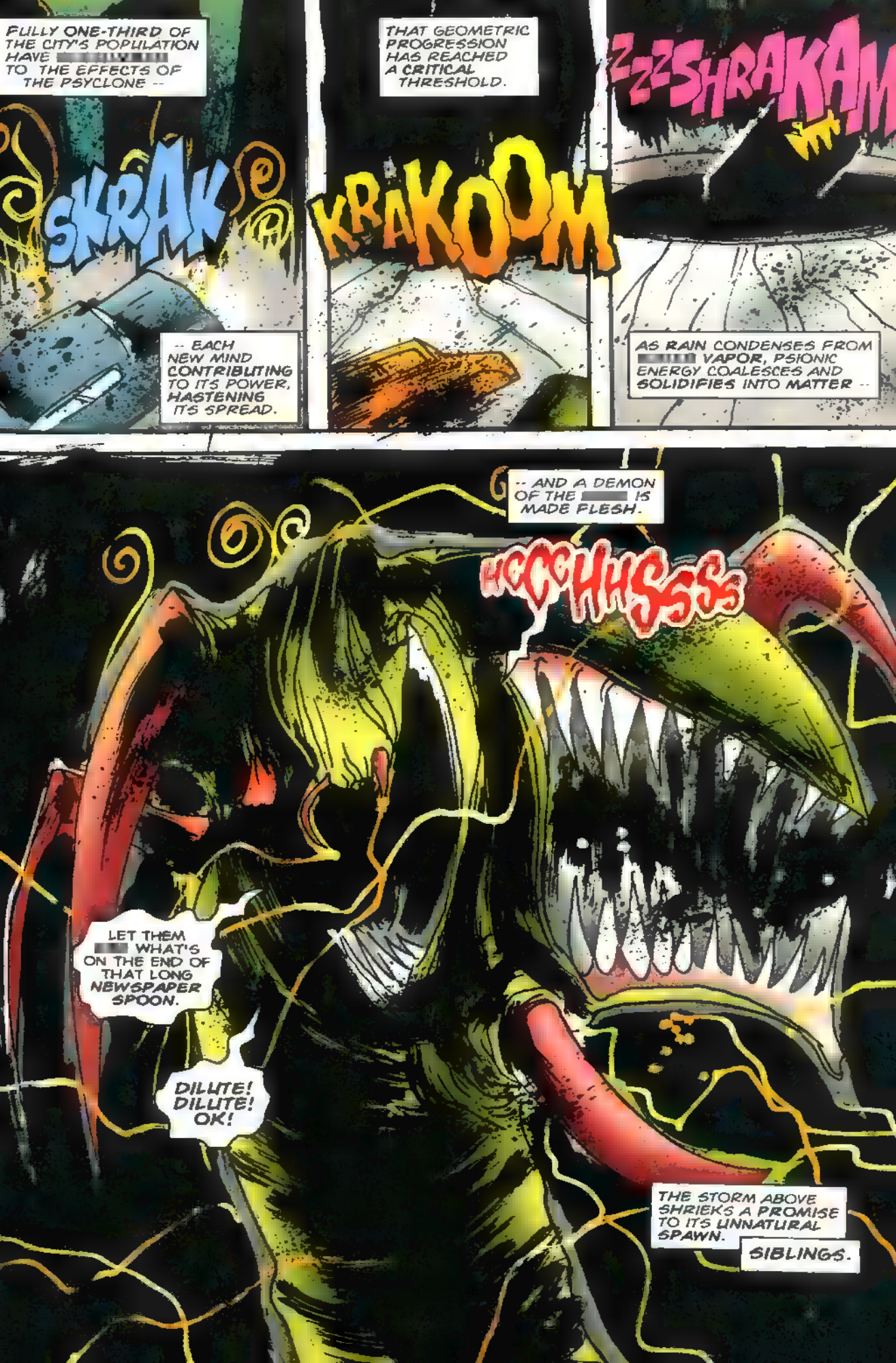
DOWNRAMP...
WOOWOOWOOWOO
THRUMMM
-- REPEAT, PULL OVER! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
THAT SOUNDS LIKE OLD TIMES.
JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT. LONG AS THE PUSBAGS IN CHARGE'RE TRYING TO TAKE ME DOWN, I MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT.
BETTER PITCH 'EM. SHAPE I'M IN, FIGHTING'S OFF MY HOTLIST.
HE'S CUTTING ACROSS TO DEADPAN ALLEY!
WAIT, HE'S --
-- GROWING?
HOLY CATALEPTIC ELVIS WITH A KIDNEY INFECTION!
MORTAL FOOLS!
PREPARE TO FACE MY WRATH!


COMING RIGHT AT US. NO, LEFT!
LEFT!
SKREEEE!!!
SHIELD'S GOT A REAL QUALITY-CONTROL PROBLEM.
BITHEADS CAN'T EVEN DRIVE STRAIGHT.
GET THE TICKET
BACK TO BIZ - GOTTA FIND SOMEPLACE TO DEBUG MYSELF.
HEY.
I'LL BE JAMMED. FORGOT ALL ABOUT HIM.
YEAH, FIGURE HE STILL OWES ME...

A SECRET LABORATORY BELONGING TO THE ENIGMATIC FIGURE KNOWN AS KABAL...
DESTRUCT
#231
INITIALIZING UNIT
LOADING MEMORY FROM BACKUP.
VERIFYING VOLUME... DOWNLOAD COMPLETE.
SKFFFF
CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF THE BLACK BOX DATA FROM MY CORPSE WILL BE NECESSARY TO DETERMINE WHERE I ERRED.
APPARENTLY MY ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH ANESTHESIA JONES WAS FATALLY UNSUCCESSFUL.
BUT FIRST, I NEED TO REESTABLISH CONTACT WITH MY FIELD OPERATIVES.
Hmh. HEARD YOU WERE DEAD.
A TEMPORARY INCONVENIENCE, CODA.
NOW, IF WARP ANGEL, ICE AND NEURODANCER WILL ESCHEW SIMILAR PLEASANTRIES, WE HAVE BUSINESS TO DISCUSS..

KABAL AND MILLIONS MORE GO ABOUT THEIR LIVES, THE WINDS OF MADNESS SPREAD WALKING NIGHTMARES ACROSS TRANSVERSE CITY ..
.. HORRORS AS UNIQUE AND INDIVIDUAL AS GENETIC CODE.
THE ANDROGYNOUS HUSTLER CALLED CASH SEES ONCE-FAMILIAR STREETS NOW SWARMING WITH EXTRATERRESTRIALS.
SKRULLS. THE BROOD. BADOON. DIRE WRAITHS. GALACTUS.
MONSTROUS, INHUMAN INVADERS REMEMBERED FROM TALES TOLD TO FRIGHTEN UNRULY CHILDREN.
A BAND OF THORITE MISSIONARIES ARE SLAUGHTERED BY THE RAVENOUS, UNDEAD MESSIAH OF AN OLDER, LESS FORGIVING RELIGION.
HEARTBREAKER AND HER FELLOW PERFORMERS AT KILLER BABES FIND THEMSELVES BESIEGED BY AN ARMY OF TOTALITARIAN FEMINISTS.
AT ST. VITUS' DANCETERIA, THE CROWD RIOTS WILDLY, A BLIND AND SUICIDAL ORGANISM RAPIDLY DISMEMBERING ITSELF.
SUDDENLY INSPIRED, THE AMATEUR PHILOSOPHER MAHLER SEARCHES FOR THE ANATOMICAL LOCATION OF THE SOUL.
BURN, GENDER TRAITORS!
NNGHAAAK
HOLD STILL, BREUGHEL. I KNOW IT'S IN HERE SOMEWHERE...

ALTHOUGH DIMONIX C.E.O. DYSON KELLERMAN'S MIND IS WRITTEN IN EXOTIC POLYMERS, EXEMPT FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE STORM ...
... HE EXPERIENCES THE GROWING CHAOS AS A PERSONAL TORMENT, AN OUTRAGE AGAINST HIS OBSESSION WITH SOCIAL ORDER.
YES, WHAT IS IT, HARRISON? DON'T SKULK ABOUT LIKE THAT.
WE'VE RECOVERED THE...DEVICE FROM YOUR, uh...
THE CHIP DOOM INSERTED IN MY BRAIN AND USED TO MAKE ME SUBSERVIENT TO HIS WILL.
YOU NEEDN'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH SPARING MY FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT.
BLAST YOU TO HADES, DOOM.
YOU SOWED THE [redacted] OF THIS ANARCHY, STOLE THE INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL AND THEN FAILED TO USE THEM.
IN FACT, THIS CHIP MAY WELL PROVIDE THE KEY TO THE FINAL SOLUTION TO OUR SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS...
uh, SIR?


FULLY ONE-THIRD OF THE CITY'S POPULATION HAVE [redacted] TO THE EFFECTS OF THE PSYCLONE --
SKRAK
-- EACH NEW MIND CONTRIBUTING TO ITS POWER, HASTENING ITS SPREAD.
THAT GEOMETRIC PROGRESSION HAS REACHED A CRITICAL THRESHOLD.
KRAKOOM
ZZZSHRAKAM
AS RAIN CONDENSES FROM [redacted] VAPOR, PSIONIC ENERGY COALESCES AND SOLIDIFIES INTO MATTER --
-- AND A DEMON OF THE [redacted] IS MADE FLESH.
HCCCHHSSSS
LET THEM [redacted] WHAT'S ON THE END OF THAT LONG NEWSPAPER SPOON.
DILUTE! DILUTE! OK!
THE STORM ABOVE SHRIEKS A PROMISE TO ITS UNNATURAL SPAWN.
SIBLINGS.

THE SECRET HEADQUARTERS OF DR. NEON.
-- AND I'M GONNA TAKE THE PUSBAG ALL THE WAY DOWN.
WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH HIM, THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF THE GHOST RIDER TO E-MAIL ACROSS THE STREET.
YEAH, YEAH YEAH. YOU REALLY HATE HIM, I GOT THAT FIGURED, ALREADY.
WHAT I DON'T VID IS HOW WE DO THE DEED.
GOT IT COVERED.
I KNOW HOW HE THINKS. HE DOESN'T MAKE A MOVE I DON'T SEE COMING UP MAIN STREET.
UH-HUH. 'S WHAT YOU KEEP TELLING ME, BUT IT MEANS JACK UNLESS WE KNOW WHERE TO FIND HIM.
TRY THE DOOR.

Oh, I'M SO SURE.
I'M STARTING TO THINK YOU'RE JUST JERKING MY CHAIN.
I GOT LOTS MORE IMPORTANT STUFF TO DO THAN --
HOLY GLITCH.
JIMMY..? >SHFZT< NEED HELP...
...BARELY MADE IT... >SQRZK< SYSTEMS'RE >ZZAK<
...CAN'T >KRPTZK< LOSING IT...
YOIKS.
>SKZZZBT<
TOLD YOU.
BEEN TRACKING HIM ON SATCOM AND SECURICAM ALL DAY.

JAGGED.
NEON
>ZZIK<
NEXT:
ROAD TO RUIN

MACHINE LANGUAGE

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Out Of My Head

Spent part of the weekend on West Broadway in SoHo scoping out an exhibit of Christie Scheele's paintings. Really breathtaking stuff! When her next exhibit takes place, I'll try an' mention it in one of our books in advance.

By the way, while I'm plugging other people's work, Bill Sienkiewicz has this neat book out that he illustrated called Voodoo Child: the illustrated legend of Jimi Hendrix. It's not only a nifty comix bio of Hendrix, but it comes with a CD of Hendrix's music, all thoughtfully timed for release roughly the same time Bill's doing some inks on SPIDER-MAN 2099.

Dear Joey,

I've been a fan of Ghost Rider since the 70's. When GHOST RIDER 2099 hit the stands a few years back, I was pleased about the prospects. I wasn't disappointed. At least, not at first. I thought Mr. Kaminski did a fine job, taking a lot of what was successful with the present-day version, as well as offering us an original take on a technologically-based character. The art was, of course, superb to start with. I really thought we'd finally gotten a comic out of Marvel that was not strictly based on super heroes of the past.

Then, there were all the artist changes and Mr. Kaminski seemed to lose some of his original enthusiasm for the stories. Who could blame him, with all the different work of different calibres he received?

Finally, we seem to have a team together and now I hear the book will be cancelled as of issue #25! What's going on here? Had the damage been done way back when Ashley Wood took over? I understand that comics are going through a tough period right now, but does that mean we have to suffer through losing titles which are of the type that offer us some hope for the industry? If that's the case, I must stop and wonder what the future holds. I hope it isn't Mr. Kaminski's view. As entertaining as it is to read about, I certainly wouldn't want to have to live it.

Richard Taylor
Asbury Park, NJ

Well, Rich, it's true that GHOST RIDER 2099 was an eccentric book, but it's also true that the comics industry has hit a slow period. Perhaps in a better market we can offer more books that aren't "mainstream" and have them be successful. For now though, we hope you enjoy the last few issues and follow our other 2099 titles.

Dear Machine Language,

Wow! I mean WOW!! The Heartbreaker back-up story in issue #21 was a killer. Literally. I applaud Marvel and you guys for offering such a mature tale. I also applaud Mr. Kaminski for the fun dialogue full of double entendres. I see that Mr. Wood got to ink himself on a few pages and his stick style is very nice. It's definitely different from what Mr. Daly's been doing. That's not to say I don't enjoy Mr. Daly's work; it is definitely easier to see this art since he's taken over, but I always appreciate the opportunity to see how an artist interprets his own work.

Anyway, back to the Heartbreaker story; how in the world did you get that by the Comics Code? Did Lovely Dame Ruth read it? Could you sneak the backup story past the Code? I had no problem with it, but on the other hand, I'm not a prude. I'm just impressed and I'd like to see more of this type of story. Maybe even a book that has pencils/inks by more than one artist.

Dear Machine Language,

Kudos to you guys for giving us a more in-depth look at Heartbreaker. I certainly can't get enough of that character particularly the way that Ashley Wood draws her. She is definitely one of the favorite fans introduced in GHOST RIDER 2099. Will this be a continuing back-up story or is it only for a few issues? How about giving Heartbreaker her own book? Or at the very least her own mini-series. She's definitely cool. A series with her and maybe even Lachryma would be great. We haven't seen too many female characters come out of 2099, but those that have have been pretty cool. It's about time that they have their day in the sun, not as simply UNLIMITED stories and back-ups. So? How 'bout it?

Chris Brooks
Rockford, IL

Chris, we'd really like to be able to do a series of bookshelf with Heartbreaker. So would Mr. Kaminski and Mr. Wood. If fan reaction is positive, it'll be a project you'll get to see in the coming year. So, let us know, guys. Would you like to see a book with Heartbreaker and another female lead character?

Dear Machine Language,

Just what is going on in 2099? Why are we losing another monthly title? I've been a fan of GHOST RIDER 2099 since it began and have stuck with it through all its artistic changes. It's remained a top quality book and a fun read. Sir 2099 that the one book that Marvel put out that was not a stick super hero title. It offered lots of innovative storylines.

I hope the cancelation of this book will not see the death of Ghost Rider. I hope he'll stick around to appear in other monthly titles. I feel he's a character who definitely needs to be explored more. He can be used as a great supporting character in other books.

Perhaps someone will find a place for Ashley Wood. His art is definitely cool. He's done a great job coming in and actually sticking around with GHOST RIDER 2099. It seemed like fans of this book would never get the opportunity to settle in with a penciller. Ashley has taken it for almost a year now and let us finally become fans-as-in with the series.

I have to know: will Ghost Rider be killed at issue 25? Please say no.

Jeremy Healy
Provincetown, MA

We're sorry we must announce another cancellation, Jeremy. We agree, but sadly, we finally getting a book with a steady artist in Ashley Wood (aka the ever-steady Len Kaminski) stays on long enough Ghost Rider 2099, the character, will be around to watch Nasdaq for a long time to come... way, way into the future. If you catch our drift.

Next Issue:

Teenage Lobotomy!